



Bernard C. "Jack" Young
Mayor

COMMISSION FOR HISTORICAL & ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION

Tom Liebel, Chairman

STAFF REPORT



Chris Ryer
Director

November 10, 2020

REQUEST: Final Review – Construct Five-Story Apartment Building

ADDRESS: 221 W. Franklin Street

RECOMMENDATION: Final Approval for Design. Return to staff with Final Details.

STAFF: Stacy Montgomery

APPLICANT: Urban Design Group (Architect)

OWNERS: HeLa Franklin LLC

SITE/HISTORIC DISTRICT

Howard Street Commercial Historic Districts:

Situated within the historic retail core of Baltimore City, the Howard Street Commercial historic district demonstrates distinctive characteristics of modestly scaled 19th and early 20th century commercial architecture. The buildings in the district represented smaller, specialized retailers in buildings that transitioned from primarily residential to commercial use at the turn of the 20th century.

Site Conditions/Architectural Description:

The site is located at the southeast corner of North Howard and West Franklin Street. The site is now an empty lot, as the buildings on the site were demolished due to their conditions. The buildings south of the site along North Howard are three to four stories. The building immediately to the south on Howard Street is a very tall one-story building, with the top of the cornice aligning with the top of the second story of the neighboring properties. There is a five-story Chicago-style building (St. James Place) across North Howard Street. On the north side of West Franklin Street (outside the district) is a new six-story apartment building and the historic Congress Hotel/Hotel Kernan (a Baltimore City Landmark). The block is characterized by the variety of late 19th and 20th century commercial architecture-from Italianate to Spanish Revival to Moderne-with highly ornamental facades and cornices.

BACKGROUND

- Baltimore City Purchased this property in 1998.
- The Baltimore Development Corporation (BDC) issued an RFP that included this building in 2015.

- In 2016, BDC entered into a Land Disposition Agreement for this property and the properties at 217-225 West Franklin Street and 423 N Howard Street.
- At the August 8, 2017, CHAP hearing, the Commission determined that the properties at 423 North Howard Street and 223-225 West Franklin Street were significant and contributing to the historic district. The Commission also determined that the properties at 217-219 and 221 West Franklin Street had lost their historic significance and no longer contributed to the district and therefore could be demolished.
- At the September 12, 2017, CHAP hearing, the Commission determined that the applicant presented a case for an economic hardship and approved the demolition of the buildings at 423 North Howard Street and 223-225 West Franklin Street.
- At the October 10, 2017, CHAP hearing, the Commission granted concept approval for height, scale and massing of a new five-story apartment building on the lots where the buildings at 217-225 West Franklin Street and 423 North Howard Street stood and that would incorporate the historic building at 425 North Howard Street.
- At the January 9, 2018, CHAP Hearing, the Commission reviewed the final design for the five-story apartment building and approved it with conditions.
- In the spring/summer of 2018, the makeup of the development team changed, a new architect took over the project, and the plans were altered.
- In October of 2018, the Commission approved a new four-story design for the new construction that would incorporate the historic building at 425 North Howard Street.
- In January of 2019, the development team met with CHAP staff to discuss the final design of the new construction that was to surround the historic building at 425 North Howard Street.
- The property was sold to the current owners in 2019.
- In June of 2020, the development team contacted the CHAP executive director and staff to alert them to the condition of the building and their determination that they could not retain the historic building.
- At the July 14, 2020, CHAP hearing, the Commission reviewed a demolition application for 425 North Howard Street and determined that the building still contributed to the historic district.
- On July 23, 2020, Eric Uttenreither, Assistant Commissioner for the Department of Housing and Community Development notified the CHAP executive director that he had posted an emergency demolition notice on the property at 425 North Howard Street after inspecting it and determining that it posed an immediate threat to the public's safety. The building, along with the others already approved for demolition, were demolished.
- At the October 13, 2020, CHAP hearing, the Commission approved the following staff recommendation: Staff recommends concept approval of the height, massing and scale - with design to return to the Commission for review- as the design meets Chapter 2 of

the *Design Guidelines for Additions, New Construction, and Non-Contributing Buildings*, specifically 2.1 *Guiding Principles for New Design* and 2.2 *Site Design*.

Staff further recommends that the design team pay special attention to the following in the final design:

- 1) The transition from the building at 421 North Howard Street to the new construction. Consider changes in building material or design at this meeting point. Also give special consideration to the treatment of the south wall that will rise above 421 North Howard Street.
- 2) The fenestration patterns of surrounding buildings.
- 3) Ensure that the building has a defined base, middle and top.
- 4) Since this is a corner building at an intersection of two major streets, design the building to address both North Howard Street and West Franklin Street. Investigate the use of a cut corner or corner entry similar to the historic building that was on this site.
- 5) Design the principal facades on both North Howard and Franklin Streets to create shadows and have depths similar to the surrounding historic buildings.

PROPOSAL & APPLICATION OF GUIDELINES

The applicant proposes to construct a five-story apartment building that covers the entire lot from Tyson Street to Howard Street and runs along West Franklin Street. The building will have a tall first floor with decorative cast stone banding, steel lintels and a suspended metal canopy along the North Howard Street elevation and wrapping the corner at West Franklin Street. A similar canopy will be used over the entrance in the middle of the West Franklin Street façade. The middle section of the building is comprised of three stories beneath an intermediate decorative brick cornice and a fifth floor topped by the decorative brick cornice at the roofline. Tall, flat brick piers are used to give the building depth and shadow. The inset entry bay to the building bisects the West Franklin Street elevation. The building is proposed to be constructed of Endicott Manganese Ironspot face brick with a metal coping, cementitious panels or stucco will be used along West Franklin Street and on the south elevation. The windows on all but the top floor will be pre-finished aluminum slider windows with fixed panels below. The windows on the top level will be 1/1 double-hung.

Staff applied *Chapter 2 of the Design Guidelines for Additions, New Construction, and Non-Contributing Buildings*.

ANALYSIS

The proposed new construction meets *Design Guideline 2.1 Guiding Principles for New Design*, which states:

- *Identify the character-defining features of the surrounding historic buildings and streetscape. Design new buildings to visually relate to the historic environment.*

Respect the established design precedent in the immediate area but do not imitate existing buildings.

- *Contemporary architectural design that reflects its current time, place, use, and culture is accepted, provided that the design is compatible with the character of the historic district.*
- *Radically contrasting building designs are discouraged within local historic districts.*
- *New buildings that are similar to existing historic buildings in materials, form, massing, and architectural features are accepted as long as the new buildings can be distinguished from historic buildings.*
- *Avoid replicating historic styles, which diminishes the integrity of the historic district and confuses old and new.*

The surrounding buildings are characterized by masonry (predominantly brick) construction with first floor storefronts, multi-light windows, and decorative cornices. The plan is designed to respond to the St. James Place apartment building on the other side of North Howard Street, serving as the other bookend to the block. The proposed apartment building is five stories of black brick with brick detailing. The use of brick as a building material and a decorative element is consistent with the other buildings on the block. The use of black brick makes the building more contemporary.

The proposed new construction meets *Design Guideline 2.2 Site Design*, which states:

- *Retain established property line patterns, street and alley widths, setbacks, primary and secondary building orientation, and landscape elements.*
- *Incorporate character-defining site design features of the historic district into the designs of new construction projects.*
- *The spaces between buildings help define the historic character of the neighborhood. Design new construction to follow the existing pattern of building widths and spacing between buildings.*
- *Primary buildings should have a similar orientation and relationship to the street as the existing buildings. Primary entrances and facades should be located, oriented, and sequenced to be consistent with the pattern of entrances and facades in the neighborhood.*
- *New construction at corners or abutting public spaces require special consideration in the design of entrances and multiple, publicly visible facades.*

The proposal meets these guidelines since the design addresses both publicly visible facades by carrying the brick piers and three-part façade along North Howard Street and West Franklin Streets. A metal canopy and a wide brick base mark the corner of Howard and Franklin Streets.

The proposed new construction meets *Design Guideline 2.3 Scale and Form*, which states:

- *The scale and form of new buildings must be compatible with the height and depth of surrounding buildings. Where there is variation of building height within the immediate neighborhood, the new building should generally relate to the predominant pattern.*
- *New buildings must complement the massing of surrounding buildings, including the proportion of solid surfaces (walls) to voids (window and door openings.) Respect the characteristic rhythm (fenestration, bays, rooflines, etc.) of existing buildings.*
- *Design the new building to be proportional to surrounding buildings. Consider important building proportions such as floor-to-floor heights, the size and placement of windows and doors, the scale of articulated elements such as porches, overhanging cornices, and bay windows.*
- *Floor-to-floor heights in new construction should be within ten percent (10%) of the floor-to-floor heights of adjacent historic buildings.*
- *Design rooflines to be compatible with those found on surrounding buildings.*

The project meets these guidelines. The five-story height, which was approved at the October 2020 CHAP hearing, compliments the five-story building across the street on the western corner of Howard and Franklin Streets. There are a variety of window patterns on the 400 block of North Howard Street, including individual double-hung windows and three-part windows, like the ones proposed for the Howard Street elevation of the new building. There are no historic buildings on this part of West Franklin Street (the 200 block); however, the building on the southwest corner of North Howard and West Franklin Street is a historic Chicago-style commercial building with large metal bay windows with decorative metal panels between the floors. The window openings on the Franklin Street façade are large, but they are separated by thick brick piers or wide mullions between the bays. The floor-to-floor heights vary on the block, but the prevailing pattern is a tall first floor with a commercial space and smaller upper stories, like the proposed new construction. The roof is proposed to be a flat roof behind a decorative cornice, which is consistent with other buildings on the block.

The proposed new construction meets *Design Guideline 2.4 Building Features*, which states:

2.4.1 BUILDING ENTRANCES

- *Design building entrances to enhance the connection between the street and the building interior.*
- *Respect the existing pattern of building entrances when locating new entrances.*

There are three entrances to the building, one in the center of the West Franklin Street facade and two on the North Howard Street façade. All entrances are glass double-doors covered by a metal canopy. The entry on West Franklin Street is recessed within the center bay which is a non-brick material. While the historic building on this site had a corner entry, all other buildings on the block have entries that face the street. The applicant has chosen to be consistent with this pattern.

2.4.5 ROOFS

- *Design new roofs to complement the orientation, pitch, complexity, and scale of roofs on surrounding buildings.*
- *Design cornices to be compatible with the height, scale, and articulation of existing cornice lines on surrounding buildings.*

The project meets these guidelines. The entrances are clearly marked with metal canopies. The entrance on West Franklin Street is also inset between the two building masses. The flat roof is like others on the block. There are several cornices on the building, one above the first story, one above the middle stories of the building, and a cornice at the top of the building. The lower cornices are simplified brick cornices with metal details, while the upper cornice is a decorative brick cornice. This is in keeping with the pattern on the block, where there is a cornice over the storefront and one at the top of the building.

The proposed new construction mostly meets *Design Guideline 2.5 Materials and Detailing*, which states:

2.5.1 DOORS AND WINDOWS

- *Design doors and windows to be compatible with the placement, scale, type, and operation of doors and window and their openings in surrounding buildings.*
- *Design doors and windows to be compatible with the architectural character of the new facade and the surrounding buildings.*

There are a variety of window types on the block, including double-hung windows, large fixed sashes, and projecting metal bay windows. The windows are more modern, but share the placement and scale of windows on the larger buildings on the block. The lower windows differ in size to create horizontal datum lines across the building. The double glass doors on the new construction are compatible with the paired doors on many of the other storefronts on the block.

2.5.2 MATERIALS

- *Choose building materials that are compatible with the color, size, texture, scale, and quality of building materials used in surrounding buildings. Where a particular material is dominant within an area, utilize that material in the new design.*
- *Cover and finish exterior walls with quality materials that are compatible with surrounding buildings. Traditional materials existing within the historic district, such as wood, brick, and stone, are preferred.*

Brick is the predominant historic building material on the block. The proposed building would be clad in Endicott Manganese Ironspot face brick on the Howard, Franklin and Tyson Street elevations. There are no historic black brick buildings in the district; however, there are a number of painted brick facades on this block and unpainted brick in red and yellow ironspot. The south elevation would be clad in Hardie panels or stucco, which is also proposed for the secondary material on the Franklin Street façade.

NEIGHBORHOOD COMMENTS

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There is no neighborhood Architectural Review Committee in this area. Notice has been sent to the Downtown Partnership of Baltimore, Mount Vernon Belvedere Association, and the Market Center Merchants Association. To date, CHAP staff has not received any comments on this project.

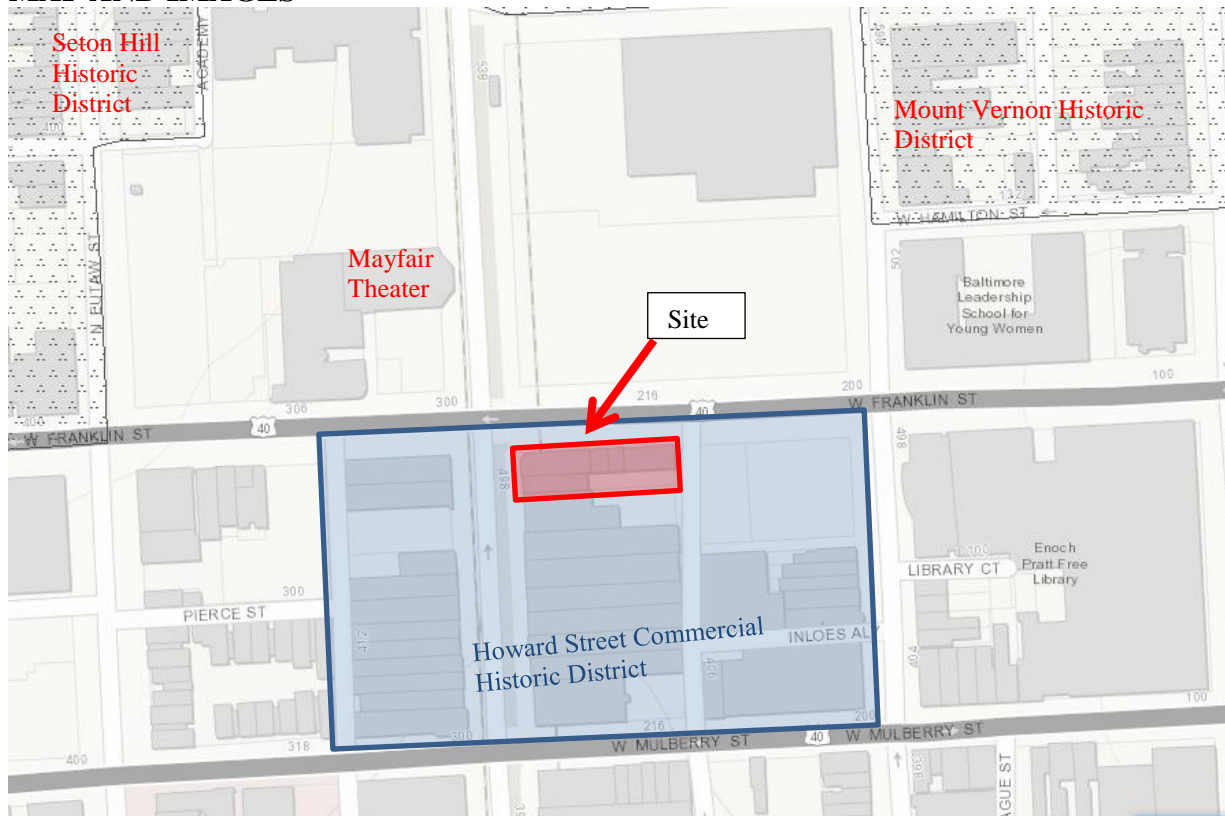
RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of the proposed design for the five-story apartment building, as the design meets *Chapter 2 of the Design Guidelines for Additions, New Construction, and Non-Contributing Buildings*.



Eric Holcomb
Director

MAP AND IMAGES



Site Map



Intersection of Howard and Franklin Streets, facing south



400 Block of North Howard Street, facing south and west



West Franklin Street facing west



Rendering of the proposal